Boston Nov. 20. 1876.

My dear Friend and Brother,

80

Pardon such an address, for more and more I feel how dear you are to my heart. I have often within these later years felt as if I must write to you, but have forborne until I feel at last that I must speak something of my sympathy. So far as personal relations are concerned, along with your other expressions of kindness I shall never forget the last time of our meeting when with your friend Mr. Anthony you called at my son's in Providence. My wife and myself have since come back to our home in Boston to spend what little seems to remain of life, and are well and happy. But we have remembered and felt how sadly different in one respect it has been with you, left in your age without the blessing granted you so long, lonely as you would be but for those living ideas, – expressions of the present God – which have quickened you. Be sure my heart is with you now, as it has been so many years.

Then I wanted also to say how glad I have been to see now and then some utterances of yours, the outgrowth of the old glorious Abolitionism: that of nearly two years ago relating to the excitement ~~at~~ raised by Gen. Sheridan's letter and the condition of things in Louisiana at that time, and more recently your published letter to Gov. Chamberlain. How grandly do those mighty words of the old Hebrew prophets adjust themselves to these days, and call our age as they did their own to repentance! The spirit out of which they spoke to ancient Israel, I rejoice to believe — and I may say perhaps, see — lives still, fresh and vigorous now as then, summoning us to the perpetual war — defeated often, always victorious — with sin and falsehood. I think often of those words in which the greatest of all those Hebrews foretold to his friends the terrible death he was soon to meet; adding, The third day he shall rise again. In every age the Truth is crucified, but the third day comes inevitably, and that man deemed was dead reappears in new life and throned over all. So I trust we shall find it now. An hour has come to us, it may be, for the seeming triumph of evil and the power of darkness; but it will be found — if triumph at all — yet triumph without a victory: the Right conquers in every defeat it encounters.

Two things as regards our national affairs are now pressing upon my mind; our relations to the freed people of the South, and our relations to the Indian tribes. It gave me joy to find the Administration which closes so soon at the outset announcing and establishing a more just and humane system in behalf of our long suffering neighbors in the North West; but it has been sad to see how feeble the support given to this endeavor by the people of our country. How horrid after the murder of Gen. Canby the cry which rose so loud even to exterminate them. Personally, so far as I have had means of knowing, Canby was a man worthy of all honor; but the murder, shocking as it was and falling on a man whom, if they had known, they would have acknowledged deserving of confidence and affection, came as the sequel and natural result of old perfidies and outrages perpetrated by ourselves in our pride and cruelty. There has been no time I can recall in my life when I did not feel more or less of the baseness of our conduct toward those into whose ancient land we have come for our honor. But for a long time I was near despairing of any remedy for the wrong. The Negro seemed to have a future before him, so there was hope in the effort to secure his freedom; the Indian seemed to have had his life in the past, and was there a prospect of rescuing him from his depression and opening for him new opportunities? The new method gave a ray of hope: is it more than a ray? Is it too late? – or can any thing be done to save these victims of our rapacity and our pride? With the burden of national guilt involved in our conduct toward these two families of mankind, added to our other sins public and private, what are we to look for? I wish it might be Repentance and thorough Reformation! perhaps it may be. Certainly I think, with all the evils we have to deplore, there is yet an evident growth in the recognition of the higher principles as elements of society and government. John Quincy Adams believed in eternal morality, and believed in it also as the foundation on which public welfare must be built; how many were there besides of the statesmen and politicians of fifty years ago who shared in this faith? Now we have the pretence at least, even where the reality may be wanting; and the pretence is tacit confession of the demand, as hypocrisy is, according to the proverb, the tribute which vice pays to virtue. So we are moving on – slowly it may be, yet surely, I think – to the day which shall reveal Righteousness as supreme. The mountain of transfiguration appears, even if at a distance; there shall be seen the face shining brighter than the sun, the garments whiter than the light. So when the shadows darken around us, rays come from the East and make even the clouds bright with the morning glow.

Some of our good friends would no doubt tell us that standing so near the hour which must sever us from these things, we ought to be getting ready for our departure, withdrawing our hold from earth and laying up provision only for that great future that awaits us.

If so, — if I am called to withdraw myself from sympathies and interests such as those of our nation and our age, — I confess myself verily guilty, and shall be obliged to make the same confession over again as long as I live. I was never more heartily engaged in all such things than now; the more that I see more and more clearly that they are all sacred things; that the Divine sphere embraces and permeates them all; that in doing anything for freedom, for justice, for our country, for mankind, we are working with no other than the Supreme Power for the heavenly kingdom; and that "heaven lies about us" in the cares and interests and pursuits of our every-day. To nothing more than the Abolition movement do I feel indebted for this great revelation. Let me further congratulate you on the privilege of standing forth as the precursor and representative of this most thoroughly religious movement of the century in which we have lived.

Pardon an old man — I have lived more than three quarters of the century — for thus obtruding upon you. I will recall that word; I think I know you too well to doubt that you will ever be glad to hear once more from one who has loved and revered you so long. My wife joins me in sincere affection.

As ever your brother in heart,
Thomas T. Stone.

William Lloyd Garrison,
Boston, Mass.

Ms.A.1.2 v.38, p.67B